



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS
EXECUTIVE

LINDA V. PARKER
DIRECTOR

For Release: September 26, 2007:

Contacts:

Trevor Coleman, Director of Communications
Detroit: 313-456-3790 Lansing: 517-373-8787

Harold Core, Public Information Officer
Lansing: 517-241-3986

**Civil Rights Director Applauds Justice Department
Delaying Approval of New SOS Voter ID Rules**

Lansing, MI – Today, Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) Director Linda V. Parker applauded the U.S. Justice Department's decision to delay approval of the proposed Voter ID regulations and the proposed closure of the Buena Vista branch office of the Secretary of State. The delay follows requests by the MDCR and other concerned organizations that the "Secretary of State (SOS) be made to hold hearings or otherwise allow for public comment regarding the proposed rule changes in voting requirements."

"I am most pleased that the Justice Department is concerned enough about the lack of opportunity for public input regarding the voting process changes that it has decided to delay approval," said Linda V. Parker, Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. "I agree that much more information is needed before the federal Attorney General can determine whether these changes comply with the spirit of the federal Voting Rights Act. Furthermore, this delay will make it much more likely that Michigan residents will be provided the opportunity to debate these changes before they are implemented."

The specific reason for the delay was a Justice Department request for further information from the SOS, so that it may ensure the proposed changes do not have the purpose, and will not have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race, color, or membership in a language minority group, as required by Section 5 of the federal Voting Rights Act.

The specific items requested by the Justice Department included but were not limited to:

- A statement explaining whether the Secretary of State is required by state law to give the public an opportunity to review the proposed Voter ID regulations before they become law.
- Records of any public notices, hearings or other methods providing the public an opportunity to comment on the closing of the Buena Vista branch office.

MDCR has maintained that the SOS's proposed rules on Voter ID requirements are subject to the Michigan Administrative Procedures Act, which requires that the public have an opportunity to review and comment on any proposed rule changes before those rules are adopted. MDCR believes voting is an important right – and that the public's right to be heard before changes that might curtail their ability to vote are made, is no less so.

Indicating that they were “directly related,” the Justice Department has decided to review the proposed Voter ID rules and the closing of the SOS's Buena Vista branch office simultaneously. Following a SOS response to the Justice Department's request for more information, the U.S. Attorney General has sixty days to consider the submission. Changes which may affect voting are legally unenforceable unless a Section 5 preclearance has been obtained.

For more information on the Department of Civil Rights visit the website at <http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr>.

###